

Draft Decision: 47 COM 8B.33

1. Having examined Documents WHC/25/47.COM/8B.Add and WHC/25/47.COM/INF.8B1.Add,
2. Inscribes **The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá**, Panama, first phase of a two-phase serial nomination, on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iv)**;
3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

From the 16th century, the isthmus of Panama in Central America, became a global strategic geopolitical asset facilitating the transportation of goods and people between the Iberian Peninsula and the colonies of the Kingdom of Spain in South and North America, the archipelago of the Philippines and the Canary Islands. The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá bears testimony of the crossing of the isthmus including strategic fortified settlements, historic towns, archaeological sites and parts of the roads that were used to connect the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean until the mid-18th century. Camino de Cruces, one of the itineraries used for crossing the isthmus, is the direct antecedent of the 19th century Panama Railroad and the Panama Canal, which opened in 1914. The use of the route goes back to pre-colonial times and the series includes a defensive system that protected travellers from the frequent actions of crime, robbery and attacks of pirates, buccaneers and other perils motivated by the invaluable treasures transported or stored in strategic locations.

Criterion (ii): *The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá, constructed as part of the process of colonisation of the Americas, played a significant role in the establishment of a global communication system that facilitated the exchange of goods between the Iberian Peninsula and the colonies of the Kingdom of Spain in South and North America, the archipelago of the Philippines and the Canary Islands. This process resulted in the interchange of ideas, skills, and traditions between different populations, including Indigenous Peoples, enslaved Africans and European colonisers. This process, which was not a peaceful one, lasted over three centuries and was centred on the expansion of the hegemony of the Kingdom of Spain, which strongly influenced and marked the history and further development of the Americas.*

Criterion (iv): *The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá demonstrates an outstanding example of a route enabling transcontinental flows of culture, resources and colonial power during a crucial stage in the history of the Americas. The location of historic port cities, fortifications and roads reflects the emergence of a colonial territorial approach that adapted and made use of challenging climatic and geographic conditions, as well as, indigenous and local knowledge, for the development of a communication and commercial system which had global impacts.*

Integrity

In spite of disruptions, the first phase of The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá demonstrates the integrity that allows to understand clearly the crossing of the Isthmus. The selected component parts and their settings help to show the overall integrity of the route. Although The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá lost its original functionality, it kept functional integrity based on re-use by miners crossing the Isthmus towards California with the Panama Railroad and by means of inspiring the modern infrastructure of the Panama Canal. While the integrity of component parts within Panama City is vulnerable to urban development pressures, the buffer zones and

urban regulations, together with a Heritage Impact Assessment mechanism recently adopted should ensure the protection and safeguarding of the property as a whole and its urban component parts in particular.

Authenticity

The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá is the result of a historic process of over 500 years which includes the transformation of the heritage route. This represents a continuity in the use of the route, preserving the spirit of crossing the isthmus through modernisation. Even though the authenticity of the setting of Historic Centre of Panama has been compromised by the development of Cinta Costera, and in Archaeological site of Panama Viejo with high-rise buildings impacting on sightlines, built heritage in Casco Antiguo and archaeological heritage in Panamá Viejo provide continuity to its historical urban fabric and bear witness to the process of settling in the Americas during European colonisation.

Protection and management requirements

Legal protection of the property is provided by national and local government laws for the protection of natural and cultural heritage. A new General Law of Culture has been passed (Law 175 of 3 November 2020) which covers the component parts of the Archaeological Site of Panamá Viejo (005), the Historic District of Panamá (006) and the Castle of San Lorenzo (001). The Law No. 456 adopted in November 2024 declares the Colonial Transisthmian Route as one cultural heritage property. Furthermore, the legal protection and management of the three sections of the Camino de Cruces (component parts 002 to 004) is based on the legislation covering the two National Parks and the Protected Forest and Protected Landscape in which they are situated.

Several Ministries (mainly Culture and Environment), national and local entities, as well as the Canal Authority are responsible for planning and coordinating different aspects of the management of the property. Therefore, coordination and shared actions are undertaken. The Comité de la Ruta Colonial Transisthmica de Panamá (Committee for the Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá) has been created as the Governmental Management Authority, that is in charge of implementing the management plan of the serial property.

Different means for the improvement of the systematic monitoring of cultural and natural properties are being prepared. Regulations for Heritage Impact Assessments have been elaborated and approved, strengthening the management system and should be operationalised considering capacity building to relevant actors on this procedure and the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

Commitment of financially supporting the conservation of the whole property as part of the policy of the State for the conservation of heritage has been made.

A specific-tourism plan and interpretation strategy are to be completed in the short term to enable the adequate visitation presenting the heritage route as a whole based on its Outstanding Universal Value.

4. Recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:
 - a) Developing a property-specific tourism plan and interpretation strategy that would be inclusive of diverse rightsholders and stakeholders' participation and relevant narratives,
 - b) Enhancing and strengthening the role of residents, local communities, Indigenous Peoples and other rightsholders and stakeholders in the management system of the serial property,

- c) *Operationalising the Heritage Impact Assessment mechanism adopted in February 2025 with central consideration to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property,*
 - d) *Continuing efforts to develop national capacity building for national officers, heritage practitioners, developers, and relevant stakeholders on the Heritage Impact Assessment procedure,*
 - e) *Continuing the conservation works in all component parts including those proposed for Phase 2,*
 - f) *Continuing research works for all component parts including those proposed for Phase 2,*
 - g) *Informing the World Heritage Centre of the intention to undertake or authorise all major projects which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in line with paragraph 172 of Operational Guidelines;*
5. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by **1 December 2026**, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 49th session;
6. Takes note that the **Archaeological Site of Panamá Viejo and Historic District of Panamá**, which was previously inscribed on the World Heritage List, is now part of **The Colonial Transisthmian Route of Panamá**.